



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

News Release

December 2, 2005

SEATTLE ATTORNEYS SENTENCED FOR FINANCIAL CRIMES AS PART OF MULTI-AGENCY FEDERAL PROBE

Men secretly accepted money from drug organization

SEATTLE – Two Seattle area attorneys were sentenced in U.S. District Court today on money laundering and tax violations for failing to report cash payments they knew were generated by their clients' drug trafficking activities.

James L. White, 49, who formerly served as a municipal court judge and Edmonds city councilman, was sentenced to 18 months in prison for money laundering. In a related case, defense attorney Mark Vanderveen, 45, was sentenced to three months in prison and three months of home confinement for failing to file a currency transaction report.

The charges stem from a multi-agency federal investigation involving U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation Division (IRS-CID).

In March, a client of White's brought a backpack containing a \$100,000 cash payment to the attorney's office. Authorities say White knew the money came from proceeds of illegal drug sales. The currency was packaged in bundles held together by rubber bands. Rather than deposit the money in a bank, which would have triggered a federal currency reporting requirement, White took the money to his home where he kept it hidden. No law office records were created to document the receipt of the cash, and no receipt was provided to the client. White spent the money on a variety of things including trips to India and Fiji.

At today's sentencing, Judge Ricardo S. Martinez told White his behavior was "extremely troubling.... You committed numerous violations of your ethical duties as an attorney and a judge." In asking for a prison term, Assistant United States Attorney Ron Friedman noted that White had surveilled one member of the drug conspiracy and arranged a polygraph exam to try to locate \$1 million in missing marijuana. The activities, wrote Friedman, are "wholly at odds with his professional responsibilities, and have nothing to do with the meaningful representation of a client, any client."

"ICE is committed to using its law enforcement authorities to dismantle the methods criminals use to earn, move, and store illicit funds," said Leigh Winchell, special agent-in-charge of ICE investigations in Seattle. "Our goal, as the primary investigative agency in the Department of Homeland Security, is to disrupt and deter activities that pose a threat to our nation's welfare and public safety."

During March 2005, White met with Vanderveen on two occasions and gave him stacks of cash from the backpack totaling approximately \$20,000. White delivered the cash to Vanderveen in a parking lot and later by leaving it in a paper bag at the Edmonds Courthouse. The cash was provided to Vanderveen as a retainer for him to represent another individual who was being investigated by federal authorities for drug trafficking. Vanderveen willfully failed to file a "Report of Cash Payments Over \$10,000 Received in a Trade of Business" (IRS Form 8300) with the Internal Revenue Service, a violation of federal law.

Vanderveen also participated in the surveillance and attempted polygraph - activities prosecutors call "deeply disturbing." As Friedman wrote to the court, "The polygraph had absolutely nothing to do with the fair and zealous representation of one's client. Rather, it had only to do with assisting a criminal organization by helping it figure out who had taken some of its product, and in determining whether one of its members might be working with the Government."

In sentencing both men, Judge Martinez noted that they were "intelligent, educated, sophisticated attorneys who should have known better." The Judge said he was particularly offended by White's second payment to Vanderveen, which "was left in a paper bag on the judge's chair in the Edmonds Courthouse -- where Mr. Vanderveen would come and put on judicial robes and mete out justice."

For additional information please contact Emily Langlie, Public Affairs Officer for the United States Attorney's Office, Western District of Washington, at (206) 553-4110.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.